

## 1.2 Nebraska High School Graduates Who Go to College in Nebraska

### **Increase the proportion of Nebraska high school graduates who pursue their postsecondary education in Nebraska.**

In addition to increasing college-going rates of Nebraska high school graduates, another approach to increasing college enrollment in Nebraska that was recommended by the 2003 LR 174 Higher Education Task Force is to increase the proportion of Nebraska high school graduates who pursue their postsecondary education in their home state, rather than going out of state to college.

The data required to monitor the proportion of recent Nebraska high school graduates who go to colleges and universities in Nebraska or other states are collected every two years through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System's (IPEDS) Fall Enrollment survey maintained by the National Center of Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education. The latest available data are for fall 2024.

The best available estimate of the proportion of Nebraska high school graduates who pursue their postsecondary education in Nebraska is the number of students with Nebraska residency who enroll at Nebraska postsecondary institutions as first-time freshmen within a year of graduating from high school, compared directly to the number who go out of state to college. Consequently, this section provides a detailed analysis of the numbers and percentages of Nebraska high school graduates who attended Nebraska and out-of-state postsecondary institutions as first-time freshmen within 12 months of graduating from high school between fall 2014 and fall 2024.<sup>13</sup>

Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who start college at Nebraska or out-of-state postsecondary institutions *more* than 12 months after they graduated from high school are also of interest. However, since there is no way of knowing exactly when they received their diplomas from Nebraska or out-of-state high schools, these students are considered separately in the analysis reported in this section.

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<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of IPEDS reporting, first-time freshmen are defined to be degree/certificate-seeking students. Students taking courses for credit but not seeking degrees are not included in first-time freshmen cohorts.

**Changes in the Number of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Enrolled at Postsecondary Institutions by Length of Time Since High School Graduation**

- Between fall 2014 and fall 2024, 1,356 more Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen attended postsecondary institutions within one year of high school graduation. During the same period, 656 fewer Nebraska-resident first-time freshmen enrolled in college more than a year after they graduated from high school, as shown in [Table 1.2.1](#). As a result, the net total enrollment of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen at postsecondary institutions increased 4.0% (700 students) since fall 2014.

**Table 1.2.1  
Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen  
Enrolled at Nebraska and Out-of-State Postsecondary Institutions  
Classified by Length of Time Since High School Graduation  
Fall 2014 through Fall 2024**

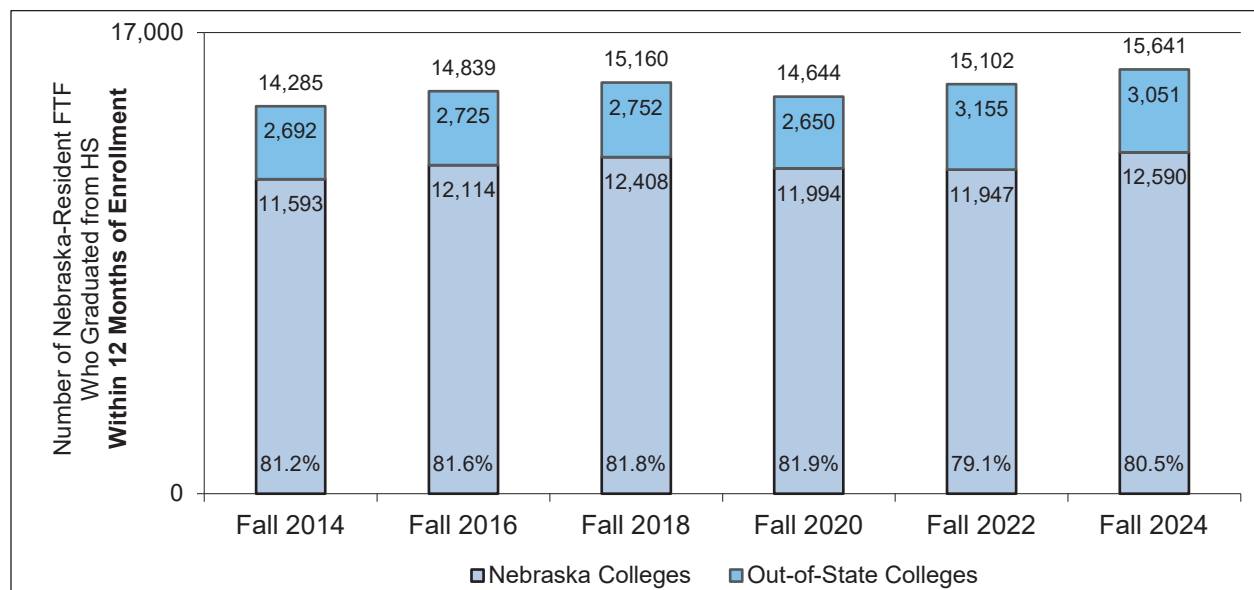
Length of Time Since High School Graduation	Fall 2014		Fall 2016		Fall 2018		Fall 2020	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Graduated During the 12 Months Prior to College Enrollment	14,285	81.5%	14,839	86.6%	15,160	89.0%	14,644	86.9%
Graduated More than 12 Months Prior to College Enrollment	3,238	18.5%	2,302	13.4%	1,879	11.0%	2,212	13.1%
Total	17,523	100.0%	17,141	100.0%	17,039	100.0%	16,856	100.0%
Length of Time Since High School Graduation	Fall 2022		Fall 2024		Δ Since Fall 2014			
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Graduated During the 12 Months Prior to College Enrollment	15,102	88.5%	15,641	85.8%	1,356	9.5%		
Graduated More than 12 Months Prior to College Enrollment	1,953	11.5%	2,582	14.2%	-656	-20.3%		
Total	17,055	100.0%	18,223	100.0%	700	4.0%		

*Note.* Includes full-time and part-time students. Δ = change. Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education discovered an error with migration data for one out-of-state institution, Texas State Technical College (TSTC). TSTC reported 540 Nebraska first-time freshmen attended TSTC in fall 2022 (403 within 12 months of high school graduation and 137 more than 12 months after high school graduation). Internal analysis of National Student Clearinghouse data reveals that no on-time Nebraska public high school graduates attended TSTC between June 1, 2022, and May 31, 2023. Furthermore, in the 10 years prior to 2022, TSTC reported only one Nebraska student attended TSTC. Therefore, the Commission has overridden TSTC’s fall 2022 migration to zero Nebraska students. See [Table A6.1](#) and [Table A6.3](#) in [Appendix 6](#) for supporting data. Data sources: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024 surveys.

**In-State and Out-of-State Enrollments of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Who Graduated from High School Within 12 Months of College Enrollment**

- The net increase between fall 2014 and fall 2024 of 1,356 students who continued on to college within 12 months of high school graduation, shown in [Table 1.2.1](#), is attributable to an increase of 359 Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who enrolled at *out-of-state* institutions within 12 months of high school graduation and an increase of 997 students who pursued their postsecondary education at institutions *in Nebraska*.
- Overall, the percent of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who choose to begin college in Nebraska has remained relatively stable since fall 2014. As illustrated in [Figure 1.2.1](#), 80.5% of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen started college in Nebraska in fall 2024, compared to 81.2% in fall 2014.

**Figure 1.2.1**  
**Number of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Enrolled at Nebraska and Out-of-State Postsecondary Institutions Within 12 Months of Graduation from High School**  
**Fall 2014 through Fall 2024**

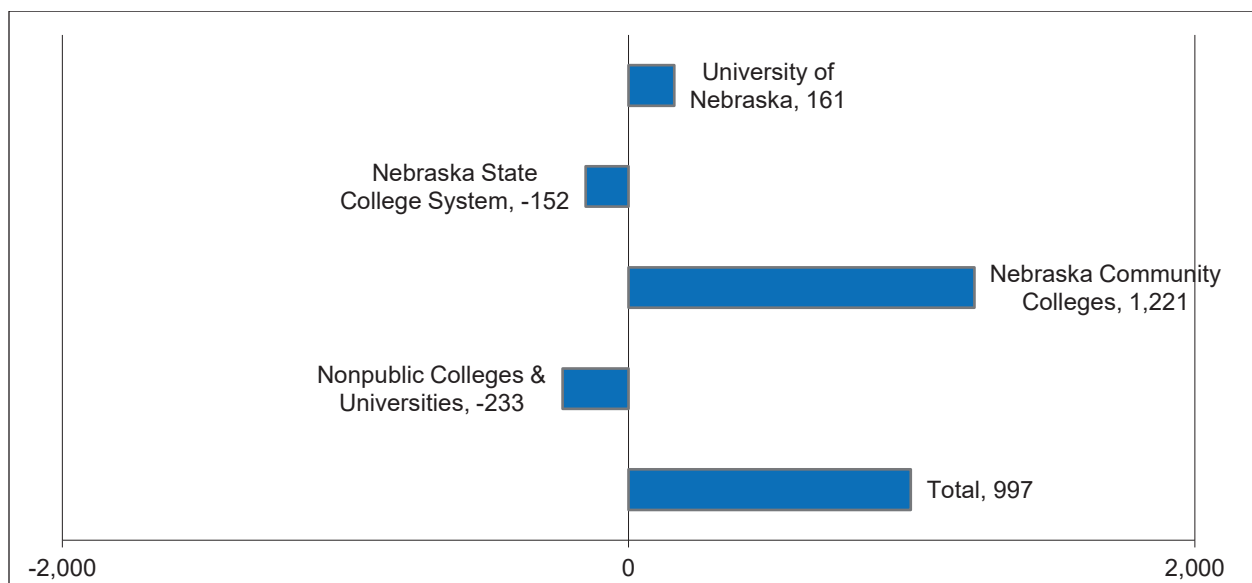


*Note.* Includes full-time and part-time students. FTF = first-time freshmen. Does not include fall 2022 migration data for Texas State Technical College (see [Table 1.2.1](#) for more information). See [Table A6.1](#) in [Appendix 6](#) for supporting data. Data source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024 surveys.

- As illustrated in [Figure 1.2.2](#), from fall 2014 to fall 2024, two of the four higher education sectors reported increases in the number of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who enrolled in college less than a year after high school graduation.
  - The University of Nebraska reported a total increase of 2.8% while the community colleges reported a 39.1% increase.
  - Nebraska’s state colleges reported an overall decrease of 15.3% while the nonpublic colleges and universities reported a 13.7% decrease.
- Overall, the number of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who enrolled at Nebraska postsecondary institutions within 12 months of high school graduation increased 8.6%, from 11,593 in fall 2014 to 12,590 in fall 2024.
- See [Table A6.2](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data.

**Figure 1.2.2**

**Changes in the Number of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Enrolled at Nebraska Postsecondary Institutions Within 12 Months of Graduation from High School  
Fall 2024 Compared to Fall 2014**

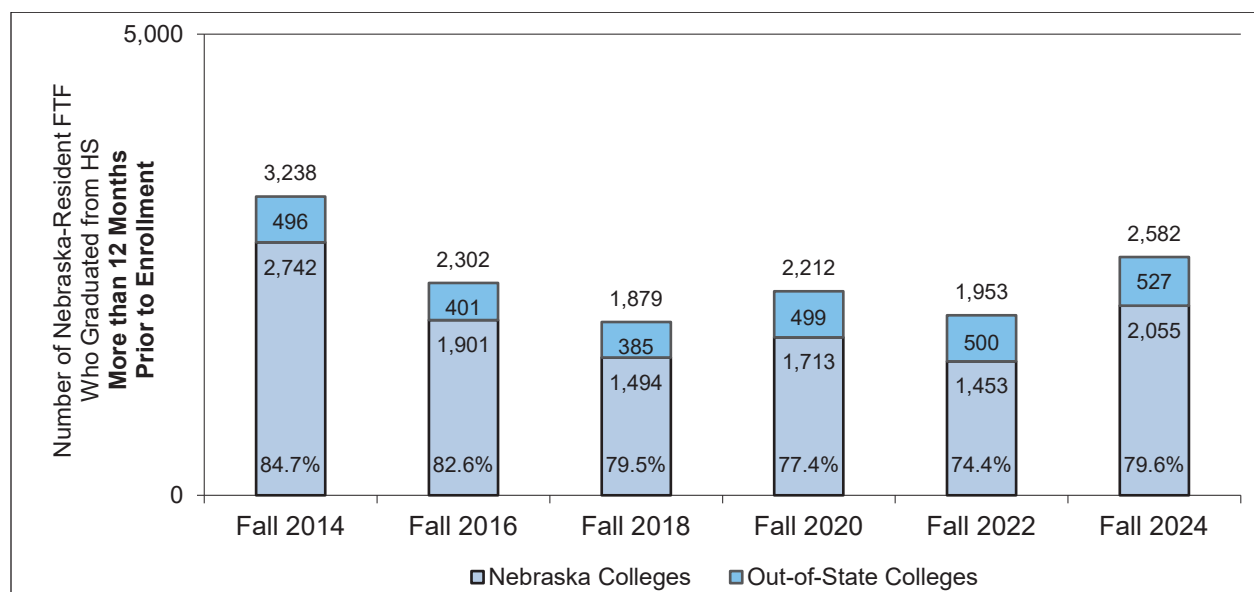


*Note.* Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A6.2](#) in [Appendix 6](#) for supporting data. Data source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2014 and fall 2024 surveys.

**In-State and Out-of-State Enrollments of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Who Graduated from High School More than 12 Months Prior to College Enrollment**

- Between fall 2014 and fall 2024, there was a decrease in the number of first-time freshmen with Nebraska residency who started their postsecondary studies at postsecondary institutions in Nebraska more than a year after they graduated from high school.
- As illustrated in Figure 1.2.3, 687 fewer first-time freshmen attended Nebraska colleges in fall 2024 than in fall 2014, a decrease of 25.1%.
- Between 2014 and 2024, 31 more first-time freshmen from Nebraska went to out-of-state colleges more than a year after graduating from high school, a 6.3% increase.
- As shown in Figure 1.2.3, the net effect of these changes in enrollment was that a lower percentage of the students who graduated from high school more than a year before college enrollment attended Nebraska postsecondary institutions in fall 2024 than in fall 2014, while a higher percentage chose to go out of state. Specifically, 79.6% attended Nebraska colleges in 2024, compared to 84.7% in 2014.
- Total enrollment of first-time freshmen at out-of-state and in-state schools decreased 20.3% (656 students) from 3,238 in fall 2014 to 2,582 in fall 2024. (See Table A6.3 in Appendix 6 for supporting data.)

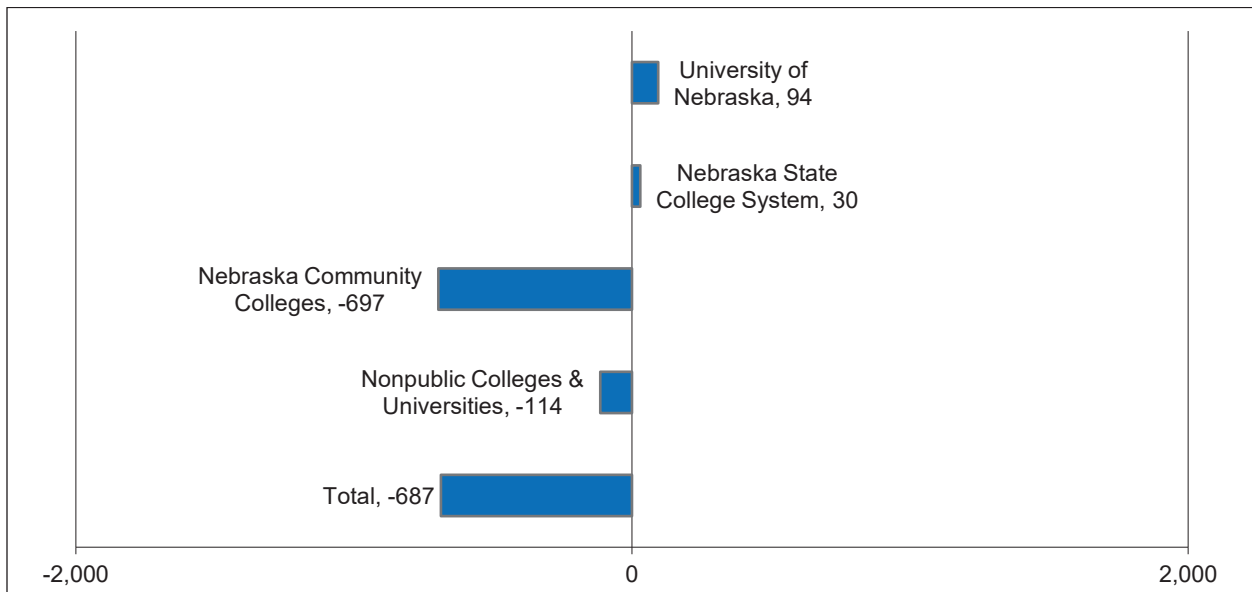
**Figure 1.2.3**  
**Number of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen Enrolled at Nebraska and Out-of-State Postsecondary Institutions More than 12 Months After Graduation from High School Fall 2014 through Fall 2024**



Note. Includes full-time and part-time students. FTF = first-time freshmen. HS = high school. Does not include fall 2022 migration data for Texas State Technical College (see Table 1.2.1 for more information). See Table A6.3 in Appendix 6 for supporting data. Data source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024 surveys.

- As illustrated in [Figure 1.2.4](#), from fall 2014 to fall 2024, two of the four higher education sectors reported increases in the number of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who enrolled in college more than a year after high school graduation.
  - The University of Nebraska reported an increase of 49.7% while the state colleges reported a 53.6% increase.
  - Meanwhile, the community colleges and nonpublic institutions reported decreases of 31.8% and 37.1%, respectively.
  - In terms of the number of students enrolled, Nebraska’s community colleges experienced the largest decline between fall 2014 and fall 2024, enrolling 697 fewer first-time freshmen.
- Overall, the number of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who enrolled at Nebraska postsecondary institutions more than a year after high school graduation decreased 25.1%, from 2,742 in fall 2014 to 2,055 in fall 2024. This decrease of 687 students is mostly attributable to reduced enrollments at Nebraska’s community colleges.
- See [Table A6.4](#) in [Appendix 6](#) for supporting data and a summary of enrollment changes by sector.

**Figure 1.2.4**  
**Changes in the Numbers of Nebraska-Resident, First-Time Freshmen**  
**Enrolled at Nebraska Postsecondary Institutions**  
**More than 12 Months After Graduation from High School**  
**Fall 2024 Compared to Fall 2014**



*Note.* Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A6.4](#) in [Appendix 6](#) for supporting data. Data source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2014 and fall 2024 surveys.